C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 004007

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TAGS: PREL PGOV IZ
SUBJECT: FM TO TRAVEL TO SYRIA, IRAQ REP AT PARIS DONOR
CONFERENCE UNLIKELY

Classified By: Classified by Political Military Minister Counselor Marc
ie Ries for Reasons 1.4(d/b)

¶1. (C) In December 6 and 9 meetings with PolMil Minister
Counselor Amb. Marcie Ries, Foreign Minister Zebari reviewed
the SPD and UNSCR processes, and robustly criticized the
Prime Minister's Office's (PMO) role in the matter. Citing
improved relations and increased Syrian pressure on foreign
terrorists and facilitators (FTF), the Foreign Minister
confirmed that he will travel to Syria on December 10.
Zebari said the GOI had given a check to the Syrian Ministry
of Finance for its part of the USD 25 million refugee pledge,
but equivocated about Jordan and Lebanon's shares. Zebari
was not optimistic the GOI would send a representative to the
Paris Palestinian Donor Conference. And, in a rare departure
from form, Zebari spoke for the Kurdish Coalition (and,
presumably, for his nephew Massud Barzani) to stress its
growing frustration with the Maliki government.

UNSCR AND SPD--PM'S Office Responsible for Delays

¶2. (C) On December 6, Zebari remarked he had just come
from a bi-quarterly briefing with Iraqi editors whom he said
"strongly" supported the SPD. He was equally upbeat about
the SPD/UNSCR presentation he made to the Council of
Representatives (CoR) earlier in the week, although he
complained that it would have been more appropriate for the
Prime Minister to address the parliament. He noted that CoR
Speaker Mashadani adroitly managed the "informational"
closed-doors session, and added the CoR would not debate the
matter prior to its presentation to the Security Council, but
would have the opportunity to vote on the final agreement.

¶3. (C) Zebari said the PMO role in the process had been an
"embarrassment" for which the USG was partly to blame, adding
'you give them too much leeway." Zebari thinks the PMO's
unfamiliarity with the issue's background and willingness to
bypass the MFA were the principle speed-bumps in the SPD and
UNSCR processes. He suggested the PMO's unhelpful role could
color relations between POTUS and the PM

Improved Relations and SARG Anti-FFT Activities Pave Way for
Damascus Trip

¶4. (C) Citing better bi-lateral relations and the SARG's
increased anti-FTF activities, the Foreign Minister confirmed
he would travel to Damascus on December 10. He also said he
would also carry a package of (unspecified) economic
incentives to the SARG. Ambassador Ries stressed that while
there were some indications of increased SARG action against
foreign terrorists and facilitators, it could certainly do
more to disrupt networks and improve security at points of
entry, particularly Damascus Airport. (NOTE: Before Foreign
Minister Zebari travels to Damascus, Ambassador Ries and
MNF-I representatives will also provide an FTF intelligence
briefing based on Objective Massey data. END NOTE.) Amb.

Ries noted the timing of the visit and cautioned against
sending any signal the SARG might construe as condoning
interference in the Lebanese presidential process. Zebari
agreed that any Syrian meddling in Lebanese internal affairs
was unacceptable. He also mentioned that the GOI and the
SARG were discussing the opening of consulates in Aleppo and
Mosul, respectively.

Refugees--Fate of USD 25 Million Pledge Still Uncertain

¶5. (C) On December 6, Zebari told Ambassador Ries he had
&washed his hands8 of the matter, but confirmed that the
money has been transferred to Iraqi Missions in Amman,
Damascus and Lebanon. Host-country ministries, he said, were
the GOI's preferred channel to disburse the funds. In the
December 9 meeting, Zebari confirmed that Finance Minister
Bayan Jabr gave the SARG a check for its portion of the
refugee pledge (15 million, according to a earlier report
Zebari provide S/I Satterfield.) Jordan, Zebari continued,
did not want to be seen as "receiving compensation to care
for refugees" so the GOI had not yet disbursed the GOJ's USD
8 million share. Zebari concluded that Lebanon could wait
for its USD 2 million portion.

Paris Palestinian Donors Conference--Iraqi Attendance
Unlikely at This Stage

¶6. (C) Ambassador Marcie Ries emphasized that we would
welcome an Iraqi representative, and noted that S/I
Satterfield also spoke to the PM about the conference.
Zebari confirmed that Iraq received an invitation, but
interpreted Maliki's response to S/I Satterfield ("I'll have
to check with my political people") to mean that Iraq would
not attend.

Zebari Dons His Kurdish Hat

¶7. (C) Expanding on the December 6 SPD and UNSCR
discussions, Zebari mentioned he would be representing KRG
President Massoud Barzani at the ISCI, Dawa, KDP and PUK
four-way alliance (which he referred to as the G-4) meeting
later that day. Zebari warned "our (Kurdish) coalition is
seriously considering the Government's performance" and
complained that the Prime Minister was too "busy with petty
things and trivial issues" to provide leadership on "services
and legislation." The main problem, Zebari went on, was that
the Prime Minister wished to control all aspects of
government (a "Dawa policy" according to Zebari) and relies
on no one outside a tiny cadre of Dawa insiders for advice.

Comment

¶8. (C) Zebari, a conscientious civil servant, usually does
not touch on his Kurdish ethnicity while discussing Iraqi
foreign affairs. His comments, however, echo others we have
heard recently from senior Kurdish leadership and his
unexpected departure from form further underscores that key
group's growing disenchantment with the Maliki government.
Post will provide septel a more detailed readout of the
Kurdish alliances' shifting relations with the Prime Minister.
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